

Light has arrived on the scene! Dark places and scary scenarios beware: In Jesus we are free to live in the light. The light of Christ illumines our way and warms us on the journey of life.

On Christmas we celebrate the Incarnation of our Lord. We are not alone. God is with us.

*Gracious and loving God, with thankful hearts  
we offer praise for the Word made Flesh  
and for your very real presence among us.  
Give us courage to receive the light of Christ,  
and strong voices to announce its presence.  
Live within us, today and always,  
and may we live with you now and forever. Amen.*

Saturday, Dec. 26

Read Luke 2:22-40

*from Rev. David T. Chafin, Deputy Regional Minister*

As the new year encroaches upon this old one, we are challenged by the startling news of the Christ's appearing to take on a life-long labor: Growing in wisdom through the grace of the One who made us.

What we have seen and heard and come to believe is going to shape us to meet each new day's adventure. Every promise fulfilled in Christ's advent has prepared the way for us to set right that which is upside-down. There is hope for those who are yearning for a glimmer of it; there is peace for those who have waited to taste its sweet comfort; there is a future for those who have journeyed in confusion and fear. The light has come. Let our growing and our living into God's new day glorify the One who gives it to us!

*Bless the birthing of this new year, O God of grace,  
Maker of all our days,  
for you have prepared the way in us to live them graciously and fully  
in the light of Jesus our Christ and our Redeemer.*

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# Advent Prayerscapes:



Created by The Order of Ministry of the  
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in West Virginia

## Week 4: LOVE

Sunday, Dec. 20

Read Luke 1:46-55

*from Rev. Jayne Chafin, New Martinsville—First Christian Church*

I've always loved Mary's Song, these great words of praise and celebration and faith. But I think I have a different perspective on them now, as a woman, as a mother, as a grandmother. Given the laws of the day when Mary found herself pregnant and alone, uncertain at what her future would hold, uncertain of Joseph's reaction or the rest of her family, I have come to marvel at her great faith to be able to sing to God, "God has done great things for me and holy is God's name."

Let's face it: bearing children is not always an easy job. Sometimes you feel sick, you watch your body stretching in ways you never thought it could, and yet - yes, and yet - "my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." Too often, we think we carry our burdens or even our bundles of joy alone. Perhaps we should take a hint from Mary and know that God is with us, even through the hard times of ridicule and pain, and even in our joys.

*Loving God, in this Holy Season, may we open ourselves  
to sing with Mary, may our souls proclaim your greatness,  
and may we truly know the great things you have done for us.*

Monday, Dec. 21

Read Isaiah 9:2-7

*from Mr. Timothy Graves, Lexington Theological Seminary  
Seminarian in Residence, Parkersburg—First Christian Church*

For fans of science fiction, the cold, dispassionate character is a familiar one. From robots to Vulcans to androids, we are fascinated by what it would be like to lack emotions. I suspect this fascination is rooted in our desire to avoid emotions that are painful or uncomfortable. Yet, made in the image of God, we all have emotions.

Negative emotions, which might sometimes cause us to withdraw from others, can also lead to positives, when fueled by the One who is hope. Guilt can help us to avoid doing that which hurts others. Regret can push us to seek reconciliation with a loved one. Loss can result in walking through doors we might not have otherwise noticed.

*Hopeful One, open our ears and hearts to your will for our lives.*

*Fuel our emotions with Hope in the One who came as a baby,  
lived among us, suffered, died, and was resurrected.*

Tuesday, Dec. 22

Read Matthew 1:18-25

*from Rev. Norma Jean McClung, Parkersburg—First Christian Church*

Joseph, the man who would be the earthly father of the Holy Child, must have been a very special person – a very kind, loving, and understanding man. The registration of citizens described in Luke meant that he and his betrothed would make a difficult journey. Joseph did his best, and stayed at Mary's side to do whatever he could.

Yet the most wonderful gift was given to the world that night – Jesus, Mary's firstborn who was slated to bring to the world the Good News for all mankind. When we think about it, we can see that God not only chose Mary, but also chose Joseph – a kind, loving, wise earthly father. What a wonderful example of family for us!

*As we give thanks for your servant Joseph,  
help us, O God, to be ready and willing  
to move at your Spirit's calling.*

Wednesday, Dec. 23

Read Titus 2:11-14

*from Rev. Darrell Pierce, Retired Minister, Clarksburg, WV*

Advent helps us develop an ear for hearing God. We see evidence in the gospel of Joseph's heavenly ear. Finding out that Mary was pregnant, he decided to break off their engagement. Then, in a dream, God revealed that Mary was innocent of wrong. Because his ear was attuned to God, he recognized his dream as a message from God and believed it, despite all of the scientific evidence to the contrary. However, Joseph went one more important step: He acted on

what God revealed in the face of the certain disapproval of his neighbors.

As we experience Advent, may we develop our ear for God's voice. When we hear, may our devotion be strong enough to cause us to follow that heavenly message, no matter how difficult or unpopular that may be.

*Open our ears to hear you, O God,  
and our hearts to the possibility of living out your word.*

Thursday, Dec. 24

*Christmas Eve*

Read Luke 2:1-20

*from Rev. Dr. William B. Allen, Regional Minister Emeritus  
serving as Regional Minister—Christian Church in Pennsylvania*

This could be the best known and most beloved passage of scripture in the Christian canon. It inspires us over the centuries. The journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, no room in the inn, the manger crib, the shepherds and angels, all speak to us of vital truths about ourselves and our God.

God is active and involved in the most mundane and inconvenient events of life – like tax collection, hard journeys, bureaucratic nuisances and the birth of babies. Into these events come powerful encounters with God with the assurance, “Do not be afraid; for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people...” In this is the invitation to participate in saying and living: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

We stand at a powerful moment and in the presence of a powerful God, in our own lives, in the life of the church, and in the history of the world. Let us “not be afraid,” and let us give “glory to God.”

*O God, you cast out fear and inspire praise  
in the coming of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Now make of us fearless, praise-filled people  
as we receive him once again into our world.*

Friday, Dec. 25

*Christmas Day*

Read John 1:1-14

*from Rev. Thaddaeus B. Allen, Regional Minister*

***And we are loved so much, that God chose to live among us.***

In the midst of our mess and confusion, God lives with us still. Let there be no doubt: In the truth of the Incarnation (our Lord putting on flesh – taking up humanity) God “gets us,” as my youngest wisely says. This is the Good News and this is Christmas.

On this holy day, we celebrate with great thanksgiving that Christ has marked the world and all of creation. We affirm again, and we announce to all who have ears to hear, that we are God's children, through the power of God made known in Jesus.